

Message Text

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ACTION OPR-02

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FM AMEMBASSY ROME

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 1625

UNCLAS ROME 19861

FOR OPR/ESC, EUR/EX

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: OGEN

SUBJ: SHIPMENT REMAINS EMPLOYEE ANITA RAY KING

REF: ROME 18999, 19144 AND STATE 291101

1. EMBASSY REGRETS REMAINS NOT PREPARED SUITABLE FOR VIEWING
AND THAT FUNERAL DIRECTOR IN US NOT SO ADVISED.

2. NOTIFICATION OF ACCIDENT NEAR CASSINO ON NOV. 19, 1976 IN
WHICH MS. KING SUFFERED FATAL INJURIES ONLY RECEIVED AT EMBASSY
MORNING NOV. 20, 1976 (SATURDAY). IMMEDIATELY, CONSULAR DUTY
OFFICER AND REGIONAL SECURITY OFFICER WENT TO CASSINO AND
CASERTA AREAS TO IDENTIFY REMAINS AND TO TAKE PROVISIONAL CUSTODY
OF EFFECTS. UPON THEIR RETURN TO ROME THAT EVENING DEPARTMENT
WAS ADVISED TELEPHONICALLY AND TELEGRAPHICALLY AND LOCAL MORTICIAN,
WELL KNOWN TO EMBASSY, REQUESTED TO TRANSFER REMAINS TO ROME
PENDING DISPOSITION INSTRUCTIONS WHICH WERE RECEIVED NOV.
21, 1976. ON 22 NOV. ARRANGEMENTS COMPLETED FOR SHIPMENT OF
REMAINS DEPARTING TWA MORNING 23 NOV. 1976.

3. DEPARTMENT'S TELEGRAM 291101 DATED NOV. 29, 1976 ONLY
RECEIVED AT EMBASSY DEC. 2, 1976 DUE SERVICING. SUBSEQUENTLY THE
DIRECTOR AND ANOTHER REPRESENTATIVE OF THE ZEGA FUNERAL HOME
WERE INVITED TO EMBASSY TO DISCUSS CONTENTS OF 291101.

4. THE DIRECTOR OF THE ZEGA FUNERAL HOME WAS DEEPLY MORTIFIED
AT WHAT HAD HAPPENED. HE ADMITTED HIS FIRM HAD BEEN NEGLIGENT IN
NOT INFORMING THE EMBASSY OF THE CONDITION OF THE REMAINS AND IN
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NOT ADVISING THAT THE REMAINS AS SHIPPED WERE NOT SUITABLE FOR

VIEWING, ESPECIALLY SINCE HIS FIRM HAD BEEN SPECIFICALLY REQUESTED TO TAKE EXTRA SPECIAL MEASURES IN THIS INSTANCE. HE EXPLAINED THAT WHEN DEATH IS DUE TO AN ACCIDENT SUCH AS THIS, THE MATTER IS REFERRED TO JUDICIAL AUTHORITIES WHO AUTHORIZE DISPOSITION OF REMAINS. THE DIRECTOR STATED THAT THE HOSPITAL IN CASSINO IS VERY SMALL AND LACKS ANY MORTUARY OR REFRIGERATION FACILITIES. THE HOSPITAL CERTIFIED THE CAUSE OF DEATH ON BASIS OF POST-MORTEM EXAMINATION LEAVING THE BODY IN THE SAME CONDITION AS RECEIVED AT HOSPITAL. UNDERTAKERS IN ITALY ARE NEITHER AUTHORIZED, NOR COMPETENT TO PREPARE REMAINS AS IN US, AND THEY HAVE NEITHER THE FACILITIES FOR KEEPING REMAINS NOR FOR COSMETIC PREPARATION. SUCH SERVICES ARE USUALLY PERFORMED BY HOSPITAL PERSONNEL. EVEN THE LIMITED CONSERVATORY TREATMENT WITH FORMALINE IS PERFORMED BY PHYSICIAN OF THE UFFICIO SANITARIO.

5. ACCORDING TO DIRECTOR WHEN HIS EMPLOYEES ARRIVED IN CASSINO ON (SUNDAY) NOV. 21, 1976 THE PHYSICIANS FROM THE UFFICIO SANITARIO ADVISED THAT SINCE THE REMAINS HAD SUFFERED INTERNAL AS WELL AS EXTERNAL WOUNDS AND CUTS THE BODY DID NOT RETAIN THE INJECTIONS OF FORMALINE. FURTHER THE DIRECTOR ADVISED THAT REMOVAL OF THE HEAD DRESSING AND THE SHEET IN WHICH REMAINS WERE WRAPPED WOULD HAVE CAUSED FURTHER DETERIORATION. ACCORDINGLY THE BODY WAS PREPARED AS BEST POSSIBLE AND THE CASKET SEALED AS PRESCRIBED BY LAW (ARTICLE 28, LAW #803 OF OCT. 21, 1976) TO ALLOW ITS TRANSFER TO ROME.

6. ON MONDAY, NOV. 22, 1976 EMBASSY PERSONNEL OBTAINED SUITABLE CLOTHING FOR REMAINS EXPECTING BODY COULD BE PROPERLY DRESSED IN ROME. THE UNDERTAKER EXPLAINED THAT SINCE ALL DOCUMENTATION IN CASE (DEATH CERTIFICATES, PERMISSION TO TRANSPORT REMAINS ETC.) HAD BEEN PERFORMED IN CASSINO - SPECIAL PERMISSION FROM CASSINO JUDICIAL AUTHORITIES WOULD HAVE TO BE OBTAINED TO UNSEAL THE CASKET ETC. SINCE EMBASSY WISHED TO SHIP REMAINS SOONEST, AND BELIEVING THAT THE REMAINS WERE PROPERLY PREPARED, EXCEPT FOR MATTER OF DRESS, AND SINCE ALL DOCUMENTATION HAD BEEN COMPLETED FOR SHIPMENT NEXT DAY, EMBASSY DID NOT INSIST UPON UNSEALING OF CASKET ETC. WHICH WOULD HAVE DELAYED SHIPMENT FOR FROM TWO TO THREE DAYS WITH CONCOMITANT FURTHER DETERIORATION. BEAUDRY

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